United Nations A/59/PV.13

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Akayev (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you most warmly on your election to the important post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to wish you success in your very complex task. I also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte.

In our troubled times, humankind is placing its most cherished hopes on the United Nations. Here at the rostrum of this Organization, I would like to express our deep satisfaction with the resolve with which the present session of the Assembly has embarked on a policy that is a quest for effective solutions to the key problems now facing the international community.

After 11 September, the highest priority unquestionably has been given to fighting international terrorism, which has now acquired the nature of a direct war. This is an evil challenge to humankind. We sincerely grieve for the innocent victims of terrorist acts, wherever they may occur. Any victim evokes sympathy, but the massacre of children in Beslan is hideously evil. The time has come for terrorists to be called to account for their criminal acts.

The "terrorist international" must be faced with a united anti-terrorist front on all continents, regions and countries. It is therein that I see the key to victory.

The tone was set for this session by the statement made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. With his customary perspicacity, he emphasized that the highest value is that of the supremacy of law in domestic and foreign affairs. Genuine interest in organizing collective action to address new challenges and threats was a leitmotif of the statements made from this rostrum by United States President George Bush, the heads of several States, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergei Lavrov, and other high-ranking representatives. Those statements were evidence of the growing confidence in our Organization and, I believe, represent a long-awaited rebuff to those who wish us ill and to sow doubts regarding the United Nations ability to resolve today's pressing problems.

A special feature of our forum today is the fact that, along with other extremely important objectives, it must serve as a preparatory stage for the sixtieth

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anniversary session of the General Assembly. The international community has the right to expect that next year's session will prove to be an historic event and establish new landmarks for United Nations activity. Recalling the ideals endorsed by the founders of the United Nations, and on the basis of contemporary requirements, I would propose that the anniversary session be called a summit of peace and economic and social progress.

Turning now to the United Nations role in the life of my country, I should like to convey to the Organization and its specialized agencies our sincere gratitude for their support of our national efforts in all areas of State-building. My people will forever recall the decision taken at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly in support of the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz statehood.

One axiom of Kyrgyz foreign policy is that small countries must have big friends. For us, the United Nations has always been such a tried and trusted friend. That is most appropriate for the development of our Republic on its path to democracy. It is well known that the electoral process is considered to be a litmus test for the level of democracy achieved in any given country. This year, with direct assistance from Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the implementation of a United Nations project in Kyrgyzstan has initiated improvements to the national electoral system with a view to ensuring that it meets international standards. That is particularly important given the election campaign now beginning to organs of power at every level in the Republic. In that context, United States President George Bush's proposal that a fund for democracy be established within the United Nations is indeed a good one. Such a fund would substantially enhance the United Nations potential in that area.

I should now like to turn to another problem. Two years ago, under United Nations auspices, the Global Mountain Summit was convened in our capital, Bishkek. In that context, too, we are most grateful for the Secretary-General's assistance. The Bishkek Global Mountain Platform was drafted at the Summit, defining key objectives for the sustainable development of mountain countries. That important document was submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

At this session, I wish also to draw the international community's attention to the needs of the least developed mountain countries. The time has come to propose, on behalf of interested countries, the adoption at this session of a special resolution recommending forgiveness of the foreign debt of the least developed mountain countries. That would serve as a powerful stimulus to their comprehensive development and to overcoming poverty and would fully jibe with the objectives proclaimed in the Millennium Declaration. A draft resolution on that subject will be submitted to the General Assembly by the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic and other delegations.

In considering future prospects, I believe that the interests of all groups of countries are most fully reflected in the decisions of the Millennium Summit. I am gratified that a thorough and scrupulous analysis of the results of five years of implementation of the Millennium Declaration is being planned as a major element on the agenda of the sixtieth anniversary session of the General Assembly. I consider the war on poverty to be of great importance in that context. The link between poverty and international terrorism is indisputable. Those phenomena are organically intertwined. Unless we can overcome poverty and the mass despair and sense of hopelessness it entails, in particular among young people, our hopes for uprooting international terrorism may indeed prove futile.

In seeking to eradicate poverty, Kyrgyzstan is relying above all on its own potential. We are most grateful in that respect for the assistance of the United Nations and the international community, expressed, inter alia, in the Monterrey Consensus. In that connection, we are hoping for increased assistance through the United States Millennium Challenge Account. In general, assistance for the development of poor countries could be considerably enhanced. I believe that this problem will also be duly reflected in the work of the present and anniversary sessions of the General Assembly.

Earlier, I linked the eradication of poverty and the fight against international terrorism. Within the range of interlinked measures, however, a policy to eradicate international terrorism through the vigorous application of collective force is of unique significance. Within the framework of the anti-terrorist Coalition now active under United States auspices, Kyrgyzstan is making an important contribution to suppressing the ever-active hotbed of terrorism in Afghanistan. I am convinced

that the October elections in that country will be a very important factor in its democratic reorganization and have a positive impact on the situation in the region as a whole.

In order to enhance its contribution to the international community's war on international terrorism, Kyrgyzstan has allowed the deployment on its territory — within limited parameters, I would emphasize — of armed Russian and United States contingents. We are convinced that, in so doing, we are strengthening the interaction of those great Powers in today's war on a common enemy. Our Kyrgyz land will continue to be a place for the great Powers to cooperate and to pool their efforts, rather than to compete.

We support international action to eradicate the terrorist threat in Iraq. That has become the principal obstacle to the development of democracy and to ensuring peace in that country. We know from our own experience that this is a long and thorny path, but one that Iraq will have to take. The foundation for the international community's actions must be the principle that, in assisting Afghanistan and Iraq in combating terrorism, establishing peace and building democracy, we are assisting ourselves.

I believe that there is a need here to unmask any attempt to provide scholarly justification of any sort for international terrorism. I am referring here in particular to the concept of the clash of civilizations, which cannot be thought of as an innocent theoretical exercise.

In that light, this summer, along the shores of our "blue pearl", Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organized a conference entitled "Eurasia in the twenty-first century: Dialogue of cultures or a conflict of civilizations?" The idea of a conflict of civilizations was firmly condemned at the conference. For my part, I believe that the term "conflict of civilizations" should be erased from the global political lexicon as unfounded theoretically and harmful in practice. I note with satisfaction that, in his statement at this session, President Bush rejected the concept of a conflict of civilizations. The future belongs to the dialogue of cultures and civilizations.

In conclusion, I wish to address the issue of United Nations reform. Kyrgyzstan supports proposals aimed at bringing the Organization ever more closely in line with the realities of the twenty-first century, particularly with respect to the role of the Security Council. In that regard, I believe that the United Nations at its anniversary session can and must decide to include Germany and Japan among the permanent members of the Council. We also support the expansion of the permanent and non-permanent categories of Council membership on the basis of the principle of equal geographic distribution.

The enhancement of the United Nations peacekeeping potential is another positive concept. Kyrgyzstan will continue to respond positively to requests for its personnel in efforts to attain those goals.

Lastly, Kyrgyzstan and other countries of Central Asia, in cooperation with Russia and China, intend to continue to support the international community's efforts to counter international terrorism and to meet other global challenges and threats through active regional measures. Evidence of our resolve is the growing role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Organization.

From this high rostrum, I reaffirm that Kyrgyzstan, in a spirit of unwavering dedication to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, will continue to be a reliable link in the international community's efforts to ensure peace, security and prosperity for all peoples of this planet.

Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Sonatane Tu'a Taumoepeau-Tupou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. Taumoepeau-Tupou (Tonga): I congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency and know well that we are in excellent hands. I should also like to pay tribute to Mr. Julian Hunte for his excellent stewardship of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We are enthusiastic at the forthcoming 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action. We see it as an extension and implementation of the

commitments agreed to in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and, in particular, in its chapter VII. Whilst the developmental path to Mauritius in January 2005 has been fraught with its own challenges, it is critical to small island developing States that the impetus for that important global review not be lost in its own rhetoric. It is paramount that the outcomes from Mauritius be refined and focused on translating the oft-quoted special case of small island developing States into firm and timely support and global implementation. As such, participation by all member States in the forthcoming preparatory process and in the International Meeting in Mauritius is essential to realizing our development aspirations.

The geographical makeup of small island States puts some of our islands at a disadvantage. That is because economic development has focused on larger islands with large populations, which thereby enjoy a higher per capita income than do other islands of the country. That is true of Tonga, where the main focus of development has been devoted to the larger islands of the three main island groups, but within each of those three groups other islands need further economic development. Three remote islands to the north, known as the Niuas, are disadvantaged by the tyranny of distance and are in fact in closer proximity to Samoa than they are to our own capital. The outlying islands of the Vava'u and Ha'apai groups are less developed than their main islands, while 'Eua to the south-east of Tongatapu has potential but needs targeted inputs. Though we have designated core donors to those islands, their further development will need additional or new resources. So I hope that, in the review of the Barbados Programme of Action, some thought is given to the lot of those living on these disadvantaged islands.

As a developing ocean State, we are vigilant about progress in ocean affairs and law of the sea issues. We consider the valuable contribution made by the meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Law of the Sea and its subsidiary bodies — in particular, the achievements of the International Seabed Authority, to whose mandate a research function should be added, and the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf — worthy of mention. Together with the important role of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process, this sets a firm and practical platform for our work during this session.

I am happy to note that the third informal meeting of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement has seen firm commitments by certain States Parties to enable the implementation and concrete operation of elements of part VII of the Agreement with special emphasis on and relevance to small island developing States. We continue to encourage other member States to become parties to the Agreement.

We are particularly pleased that the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean entered into force earlier this year. We consider that special milestone worthy of note in the Assembly's work.

Wanton acts of terrorism continue to test our fortitude as members of the international community. We must remain collectively resolute in our resolve to prevent and vigorously combat the proponents of that evil, and we must be innovative and versatile in our pursuit of meaningful countermeasures and lasting solutions.

We continue to strongly support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and applaud the recent revitalization of it and its work. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) remains the basis of domestic measures implemented by my Government, including the submission of country and, where appropriate, regional reports. It is useful to identify areas where financial and technical assistance is necessary to enable stronger compliance by all States in meeting their international obligations.

After eight years of negotiations, Tonga's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) is in the final stages. Bilateral market access agreements on goods and services have been concluded with Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand and Panama. Agreement with the United States is outstanding, as it has requested that we accede to the Chemical Harmonization Agreement and the Information Technology Agreement. Although this is an additional burden on us, we do understand that the United States is requesting the same commitments from every acceding country. The working group report has been discussed at informal working parties and so gives rise to cautious optimism that we could conclude the process before the 2005 ministerial meeting.

Tonga needs the understanding and the support of all WTO members as we seek commitments commensurate with the size of our economy and the stage of our development. To be sure, Tonga is not seeking greater market access, but desires security for its trade under a rule-based, multilateral trading system.

Tonga adheres strictly to the "one China" policy and recognizes that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. We welcome the shared principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and, as such, we consider that delicate and sensitive issues are best dealt with in an across-the-Strait dialogue rather than at international forums.

We welcome the expanding cooperation with China and recognize that its huge market provides a range of commercial, financial and trade possibilities for us and, to that end, Tonga has adopted a "look east" policy. To give effect to its interests in China, Tonga will soon establish a diplomatic presence in Beijing to explore those interests further.

For a decade now, we have exported our squash produce to Japan and, more recently, we have been exporting specially cultivated seaweed to its markets. It is timely that we now explore further forms of cooperation with Japan in the field of fisheries, trade in other produce, financial and investment possibilities, as well as education and training. To pursue those interests, we are giving thought to a possible presence in Tokyo, although such an undertaking will be determined by available financial resources. The policy does not supplant the long-existing warm ties of friendship we enjoy with Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States in the Pacific region, as those friendly ties and a broad range of cooperation are firmly rooted in our policy.

My Government has approved the fourth deployment later in the year of police officers to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Also, approval has been given for the deployment of the third contingent of defence personnel for 2005, in concert with the agreed rotation formula under RAMSI.

We all look forward to the report of the High-Level Panel. Judging from the makeup of the Panel and its formidable credentials, I should think the report and recommendations will set the tone for the constructive engagement of the General Assembly.

The membership of the Security Council ought to be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories in accordance with the realities of the day and perceptions of tomorrow. We believe that Japan should be a permanent member and that there should be a permanent seat for Africa and another for Latin America.

Five years ago, Tonga was admitted to membership of the United Nations and has since actively participated in United Nations activities. It is now giving favourable consideration to contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Consequently, arrangements for our participation will be discussed further with the United Nations. The scope of our deployment will be fashioned by our available manpower and financial capacity.

Although violence renders an enduring peace elusive, we continue to harbour hopes that a lasting peace can soon be concluded so that a Palestinian State can be established, living side by side with the State of Israel in internationally recognized borders and in peace and security.

Our development has been made possible through domestic resources and also through bilateral and multilateral programmes of assistance, all of which have been highly appreciated. Our major donor partners have been Australia, China, the European Union — with some members providing additional assistance — Japan and New Zealand. The United States provides assistance through its fisheries treaty with the Pacific region and through other avenues. In recent times, India, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia have provided technical assistance. The United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Global Fund, the World Bank and other financial institutions have provided various forms of assistance and technical expertise. Much of the technical assistance is channelled to combating diabetes and tuberculosis and preventing the spread of the HIV/AIDS. Other assistance has been directed at meeting our Millennium Development Goals and to small community programmes and projects.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Habib Ben Yahia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to read out the statement of Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia and Chairman of the sixteenth session of the Arab League Council, who had wanted to attend this meeting but was detained by urgent commitments. The statement reads as follows:

"It is my distinct pleasure to convey to you, Sir, and to your sisterly country, the Republic of Gabon, my sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. We wish you every success.

"I also wish to express to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, my great appreciation for his excellent management of the proceedings of the previous session.

"I also take this opportunity to convey my thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his commendable efforts to promote the role of the Organization and to fulfil its objectives of establishing security and peace throughout the world.

"Tunisia reiterates its commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and reaffirms its steady resolve to continue to contribute to all efforts to reform the Organization and to develop its structures, the General Assembly and the Security Council in particular, so that it can remain the guarantor of the application of international law and the consolidation of justice, stability and development throughout the world.

"Faced with rising tensions in many regions of the world, the widening development gap between countries and the serious challenges confronting humankind, the international community is called upon to reorganize international relations in accordance with a new vision based on cooperation, solidarity and coexistence among all peoples. That is the approach which we sought to develop at the Summit Conference of the Arab League Council hosted by my country on 22 and 23 May, the current session of which we have the honour of chairing.

"In addition to the outcome of the Arab Summit, which represents a qualitative leap in the system of joint Arab action, the Arab States sent a clear message to the international community. In it, they reaffirmed their commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace as a strategic option in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on the Arab peace initiative, international legality, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the implementation of the road map. The community of Arab States is determined to intensify its international activities to reactivate the Arab peace initiative and to rally international support for it.

"The serious escalation of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel's stubborn imposition of a policy of fait accompli and unilateral measures require the international community to act promptly to end the violence against and provide international protection for the brotherly Palestinian people, to lift the siege imposed on its legitimate leadership, to cease the building of settlements and to recognize the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice declaring the construction of the separation wall illegal and calling for its demolition. We believe that this would help to create conditions conducive to the establishment of a new era of confidence and understanding among all parties in the region in which the peace process can be resumed, the brotherly Palestinian people can recover its legitimate rights and establish its independent State, and Syria and Lebanon can recover all of their occupied territories.

"While renewing its commitment to supporting Iraq's national unity and respect for its sovereignty and independence, the community of Arab States stresses the need for the United Nations to assume its vital role in that sisterly country. In the framework of the League of Arab States, we will continue to support international efforts to demonstrate the solidarity of the Arab world with the Iraqi people as our contribution to establishing security and stability in that country and creating conditions conducive to its reconstruction.

"The Arab countries also support the efforts made at the United Nations and regional levels, and in particular by the African Union, to achieve unity, peace and development in the brotherly Sudan. They also welcome the steps taken by the Sudanese Government to honour its commitments under the agreement to re-establish security and stability in Darfur, signed on 3 July 2004 with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

"The Arab Summit was an historic occasion at which the Arab States reaffirmed the fact that finding just solutions to the fundamental problems of the region that have adversely affected world peace and security would reinforce the instincts of its peoples for security and peace, enhance the development process, update and consolidate the principles of human rights and democracy, and promote the role and status of women in society, in conformity with each country's cultural specificities, conditions and abilities, and based on its own free will and commitment to shared humanitarian values.

"Given the Arab States' conviction of the importance of the economic and social dimensions in strengthening the process of building the pan-Arab system, our Arab Summit has decided to establish a common strategy for economic and social action and a plan to fight poverty and reinforce development efforts. In so doing, it has demonstrated its resolve to contribute to implementing the decisions of the Millennium Summit. The Arab States' call for the articulation of a new concept of cooperation- and solidarity-based partnership with all countries of the world consecrates the path of dialogue among cultures and anchors the values of tolerance, understanding and complementarity among them.

"Our States and peoples hope that the international community and the influential parties will step up their endeavours to settle the pending issues in the region, support the efforts of countries to upgrade their economies, and promote their development and social programmes in the framework of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

"Tunisia is eager to contribute to the promotion of joint Arab action and seeks to give new impetus to regional cooperation. In that context, we and our brother leaders of the Maghreb States are seeking to reactivate the Maghreb Union, which is an irreversible strategic choice and a legitimate aspiration, shared by all the peoples of the region, to greater complementarity and solidarity. Our country is also eager to continue contributing to building the structures of the African Union, strengthening the foundations of security and stability in Africa, and establishing economic and social cooperation among African countries. That will effectively help our countries to achieve integration in the march towards prosperity and progress and to create genuine partnerships with regional groupings throughout the world.

"At the Mediterranean level, the 'five plus five' summit involving the Maghreb countries and European countries of the southern Mediterranean, held in Tunis in December 2003, has made a fresh start for cooperation and solidarity-based partnership among them in the context of establishing security and stability and of achieving economic complementarity, cultural and social communication, and constructive political dialogue. Serving as coordinator of the community of Arab States within the Euro-Mediterranean process, Tunisia strives to inject more efficiency and vitality into the process so as to consolidate the foundations of security, stability and development within the Euro-Mediterranean area.

"The World Solidarity Fund for poverty eradication, created on the basis of a Tunisian proposal of 1999 and adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2002, reflects Tunisia's ongoing commitment to anchoring the principles of justice, solidarity and sustainable development in the world, based on our successful pioneering national experience in that field over many years. We believe that the Fund, which has become a United Nations mechanism, requires all members of the international community, including Governments, civil society and private sectors, to pool their efforts and swiftly mobilize the financial resources necessary to activate it.

"In that context, we suggest the proclamation of 20 December of each year as the

world day for the fight against poverty, in commemoration of the date of the General Assembly's adoption of the resolution establishing the Fund and in order to enshrine the concept of solidarity as a permanent universal value in international relations. We also welcome any initiative in support of the activation of the Fund. In that regard, we take special note of the initiative of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Federal Republic of Brazil.

"Tunisia's sustained efforts to provide optimum conditions for the hosting of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society on 16 to 18 November 2005 are also being undertaken in that context. We called for the convening of such a summit in 1998, based on our conviction that, today more than ever before, our world needs to establish a solidarity-based digital partnership, allowing all countries to be integrated into the international information society. In that way, we hope to achieve a more just and balanced approach as a strong development and cultural bridge between the countries of the world, in fulfilment of the goals and principles of the Millennium Summit.

"I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my earlier invitation to heads of State and Government, to representatives of civil society and the private sector and to other international organizations, extended at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003, to participate actively in the Tunis Summit in order to ensure its success and to achieve the prosperity and well-being of all humankind.

"The General Assembly's adoption of the Tunisian proposal to proclaim 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education was a recognition of the importance of those two activities in strengthening the bonds of friendship, cooperation and rapprochement among peoples and in further disseminating peace and development throughout the world. We are convinced that all countries recognize the noble dimensions of the proclamation and will spare no effort to formalize it within their national programmers next year.

"The increasing danger of the phenomenon of terrorism in our times requires greater international coordination in resisting that scourge and averting its threats by treating its root causes, finding just solutions to several outstanding international problems, and curbing poverty, exclusion and marginalization in the world. Tunisia is convinced that international relations can prosper and develop only in a climate of dialogue, entente and solidarity, eschewing fanaticism, extremism and the dangers of discord and warfare and in a context of justice, mutual respect and equitable cooperation among individuals, groups and peoples. Thus, security, peace and stability may prevail throughout the world and humankind may look to the future with the utmost confidence, optimism and ambition."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): On behalf of the delegation of Bhutan, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to your important post. I assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation as you guide the work of this important body for the year. We are confident that, with your vast experience and able leadership, our deliberations will be productive. May I commend Mr. Julian R. Hunte for his stewardship and contribution to the work of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The task before the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly is daunting, given the array of issues and challenges facing the international community. Among them is the issue of reform of the United Nations. In that regard, the General Assembly's resolutions on the revitalization of its work and the reform initiatives in other organs and agencies are timely and welcome, as they will serve to ensure the United Nations continued relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing world. My delegation looks forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change set up by the Secretary-General to examine the current challenges to peace and security.

Much of the ongoing debate on United Nations reforms has justifiably centred on the reform of the Security Council as the organ charged with the

maintenance of international peace and security. In a world torn by old and new conflicts, the Security Council must evolve in order to remain effective and to enjoy the confidence of all member States. Its composition must change to reflect the wider membership of the United Nations and the new geopolitical and economic realities of the present-day world. Bhutan supports the call for an expanded Security Council through increased membership of both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Among others, Bhutan strongly believes that India and Japan, in view of the important roles they play in international affairs, are pre-eminently qualified for permanent membership in an expanded Council.

The toll of innocent human beings falling prey to terrorism continues to mount by the day. Gruesome acts of terrorism in different regions of the world, including the recent brutal killing of schoolchildren in Beslan and the cold-blooded murder of Nepalese and other innocent people in Iraq and elsewhere, have raised the level of horror to new heights. We strongly condemn those senseless killings. Even my country has not been spared the scourge. Having exhausted all peaceful means to prevail upon the heavily armed foreign militant groups from north-eastern India to leave our territory, the Royal Government was compelled to use force to remove them in mid-December 2003. Most recently, two people were killed and 27 injured by a bomb blast in a marketplace in a border town in southern Bhutan.

There is an urgent need to take concerted action to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Every nation gathered here, by having signed the Charter of the United Nations, ascribes to the universal code that the methods which terrorists employ to achieve their aims, especially the targeting and killing of innocent civilians, cannot be justified.

Conflicts and crisis situations continue to disrupt the political stability, security and socio-economic well-being of millions around the world. Many such conflicts are fuelled by conditions of poverty and underdevelopment. Recognizing that interrelationship, the international community has taken numerous initiatives in recent years. Several major conferences have been convened, including the Millennium Summit, that have provided a comprehensive set of time-bound targets to be achieved in order to secure a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

However, those targets remain distant for many and the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider among and within nations. The Global Monitoring Report 2004 of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund indicates that economic growth in many developing countries remains below the level considered necessary to reach the Millennium Development Goals. If the Goals are to be achieved by the target date, the report states, all parties urgently need to do much more. The Monterrey Consensus reinforced the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and emphasized the roles of all parties involved in the process of financing for development. While developing countries have to accelerate reforms, developed countries must provide more aid, foreign direct investment, debt relief and more open access to their markets.

It is against that background that my delegation welcomes the 2005 high-level plenary meeting to review the integrated follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits. My delegation hopes that the review will lead to further concrete action by all stakeholders. Furthermore, as a landlocked, least developed country, my delegation hopes to see the issues and challenges identified in the Almaty and Brussels Programmes of Action receive the highest priority during the review.

May I mention that the Royal Government of Bhutan, under the leadership of His Majesty the King and guided by the development philosophy of gross national happiness, has been making concerted efforts to ensure the all-round development of the country and to realize the agreed goals of the various international conferences, in particular the Millennium Summit. I am pleased to report that, with the continued support of our development partners, Bhutan is hopeful of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In that regard, I take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of the Royal Government and people of Bhutan to the United Nations and other donors for their contributions to the development of my country.

As I conclude my statement, I would like to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his strong leadership and relentless efforts to advance the cause of peace, development and security. We will continue to benefit from his vision and leadership for the next two years. As he leaves his post at the end of 2006, our work to find a suitable replacement to lead the United Nations has to begin soon and in earnest.

My delegation believes that, in keeping with the principle of equitable geographical representation, and in consideration of Asia's being the most populous continent with the largest regional grouping of 55 members in the United Nations, a Secretary-General from Asia would be both timely and appropriate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Biossey Kokou Tozoun, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Tozoun (Togo) (*spoke in French*): In expressing to you, Sir, our great pride at seeing an eminent representative of the Group of African States preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, I wish to offer you, on behalf of Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, President of the Togolese Republic, and of the Government and the people of Togo, which it is my great honour to represent, our sincere wishes for your success in fulfilling your mandate.

We also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his dynamic and unequivocal work at the head of our Organization.

The present session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when international peace and security continue to be seriously threatened, requiring our common Organization fully to shoulder its role and mission with even greater determination and bolder initiatives. Indeed, we are living in a world of precarious balances arising from our collective inability to establish genuine peace and shared well-being in the framework of international legitimacy.

In Africa, the legitimate aspirations of people to lasting peace, in particular in those countries and regions where that peace is being sorely tested, have yet to be achieved.

In Côte d'Ivoire, after numerous short-lived hopes have been dashed, the implementation of the Accra III Agreement remains today the sole hope for the restoration of peace and stability in that country. The Togolese Head of State, who from the very beginning of the crisis committed himself to the path of dialogue and reconciliation, will continue to be involved in the peaceful settlement of that fratricidal conflict.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recently arisen obstacles to the peace process, which is intended to lead to the holding in 2005 of elections for the creation of new institutions, have required the international community to spare no effort in maintaining the gains won through the costly deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and in launching, whenever necessary, such operations as Artemis to nip in the bud any impulse towards a resumption of combat wherever it may arise. The Government of Togo therefore unreservedly supports the Secretary-General's proposal significantly to increase the number of MONUC personnel.

It is to be hoped that the international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, to be held in November, will be the appropriate framework for finding lasting solutions to the problems of insecurity and instability that continue to weaken relationships among States of the region and to jeopardize the emergence of a climate of good-neighbourliness and mutual understanding.

In the Sudan, regarding the tragedy unfolding in Darfur, the international community must urgently assist the Government of that country and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement to consolidate the peace process through the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement. In that regard, the international community must provide consistent support to the African Union's peace operation.

In Burundi, Liberia and Somalia in particular, the outburst of solidarity and renewed interest which the international community continues to show in the restoration of peace and the recovery of those countries, battered by long years of war, should be accompanied by more adequate financial and logistical assistance. Togo, for its part, will continue to contribute to conflict and crisis resolution in Africa and to support the various United Nations peacekeeping operations by supplying military contingents or observers, as it is currently doing in Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Liberia and Haiti.

The prevailing situations in the world, particularly in Iraq and the Middle East, are a source of major concern. In Iraq, the restoration of full sovereignty to the Iraqi people and the recognition that the United Nations has an important role to play in rebuilding the country should give every element of Iraqi society the opportunity to work with resolve to

build a stable and prosperous country free of all violence.

In the Middle East, the ongoing escalation of violence between the State of Israel and the Palestinian State may definitively compromise the continuation of the peace process and the implementation of the various agreements that have been signed. In that respect, the international community and the Quartet must strive to persuade the two protagonists to avoid unilateral action and to return to the negotiating table on the basis of the road map and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Furthermore, we wish to emphasize, again with respect to crisis issues, that post-conflict situations clearly demonstrate the importance of providing adequate financing, not only for humanitarian assistance but also for other vital programmes to promote peace and sustainable development. There is thus a need for the financing of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants and other long-term instruments for ensuring peace — such as education, health care and job creation for young people — to be made a priority of post-conflict peace-building.

In the same context, the troubling financial situation of the three Regional Centres for peace and disarmament call for more attention from the Assembly if they are to enjoy the financial resources necessary to fulfil their mandates harmoniously. In that regard, and on the basis of the relevant Secretary-General's reports, the delegation of Togo firmly believes that it is high time for the General Assembly seriously to review the financing of the Regional Centres in order to provide them with adequate financial resources under the Organization's regular budget. In so doing, the General Assembly would demonstrate its genuine support for the Organization's goals in the area of arms control and disarmament and its appreciation of the active role played to date by the Centres. For its part, my country, which hosts the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, will do its utmost to ensure the Centre's continuity and long-term viability.

Terrorism is the other major danger of our times because it continues seriously to threaten our States and is thus a scourge in the face of which failure to act effectively means giving way to the forces of evil. Having endured terrorism in the past, Togo once again condemns the heinous terrorist attacks perpetrated recently around the world and keenly hopes that more decisive action will be undertaken to eradicate that disease of the human conscience.

From that perspective, while it is up to each State to take the measures necessary to strengthen security within its own borders, we must strive above all to enhance regional and international cooperation among States and to ensure that the poor States can enjoy adequate assistance in the implementation of effective national mechanisms to combat terrorism.

Economic and social development is a corollary of peace and security. We all recall that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Millennium Summit was convened here in this very Hall. Following the Summit, at which the problems of poverty and development were debated, the heads of State and Government adopted the Millennium Declaration, an unprecedented affirmation of international solidarity in which the rich and poor countries together undertook firm commitments whereby they forcefully reaffirmed their will to reduce by half, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's population touched by poverty. World leaders voiced the hope at that time that other major meetings also held early in the new millennium would serve as a framework for the birth of genuine partnership between the countries of the North and those of the South.

Several years later, however, we note with regret that the Millennium Development Goals have been hard to achieve. Indeed, the necessary resources to finance sustainable development and to combat poverty and hunger in the developing countries have not been mobilized and, contrary to expectations, only a small number of developing countries have been able to make progress in the elimination of poverty.

The critical economic situation in Africa requires a collective awakening and introspection. What has happened to our myriad commitments? What has happened to our many promises?

Regarding the rules of international trade, which remain unfavourable to the poor countries; regarding the long-awaited debt relief; regarding the fact that the goal of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product for official development assistance has been met by only a small fraction of donor countries, we may well ask ourselves what happened to the solidarity so loudly proclaimed at the Millennium Summit.

Last year's failure of the World Trade Organization trade negotiations in Cancún — designed to settle the critical issues of eliminating agricultural subsidies and providing access to the markets of the industrialized world for the products of the countries of the South — highlighted yet again the North-South division and evoked real fears for the future of the multilateral trade system.

On the basis of those questions and concerns, the delegation of Togo reaffirms the need for all international partners to reflect in deeds the political will they proclaimed at the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development so as to give new impetus to efforts to increase official development assistance, to provide debt relief and equitable access to markets, to protect the environment, and to combat malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

2005 will be a crucial year for our Organization. Indeed, in 2005, we shall engage in in-depth consideration of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. In 2005, we shall hold a high-level debate on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. In that regard, we need to bear in mind that the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly set specific goals to be met for 2003 and 2005 towards the eradication of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Above all, 2005 will be the year of the high-level plenary meeting to engage in a comprehensive review of progress made in the implementation of all of the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration and at the major United Nations conferences and summit meetings in the economic and social fields.

We therefore await those meetings with interest. They will give us the opportunity to reaffirm our political commitment to building a world of greater solidarity and prosperity in order to give hope once more to that significant segment of the world's population that lives on less than $1 a day, suffers from hunger and malnutrition and has no access to drinking water.

The peace and economic and social development that we desire for our countries cannot be achieved without the effective participation of peoples in managing public affairs. Democracy in Togo, based on a multi-party system and the rule of law, has become a vibrant reality, inter alia, through the adoption of important legislative and administrative texts and the establishment of virtually every institution provided for by the Constitution. With faith and determination, the Government of Togo, under the impetus of the Head of State, is striving to build a genuinely democratic society that also takes the sociological realities of our country into account.

In order to complete its task, the Government has declared its openness to any constructive contribution from the national political class and civilian society, as well as from our development partners. In that context, on 14 April it opened consultations with the European Union, in conformity with article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement of partnership linking that organization to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. At the outset of the consultations, the Government endorsed a number of commitments whose implementation is currently near completion and should ultimately lead to a better foundation of democratic culture and the consolidation of the rule of law.

The Government intends to strive to bring the consultations to a successful conclusion, the ultimate objective of which is the resumption of cooperation between the European Union and Togo. The political zeal of the Togolese authorities — reflected in the implementation of an ongoing inclusive national dialogue; the adoption of a press and communications code; the drafting of an improved electoral code and a financing law for political parties; and the decision taken by the Head of State on 11 August to release more than 500 common-law prisoners — is a guarantee of the Government's resolve to create favourable conditions for the citizens of Togo to enjoy their fundamental rights, and in particular their political and economic rights.

We take this opportunity to launch an urgent appeal to all our development partners to assist the Government of Togo in the process of strengthening and consolidating democracy and the rule of law.

I cannot conclude without returning to the recurrent issue of United Nations reform. The Government of Togo wishes to propose that bold decisions be taken at this session to accelerate the process of reform of the system, and of the Security Council in particular, so that the issue can be more than a mirage. Indeed, the numerous challenges confronting

today's world require a strengthened and more effective Security Council, which only a more representative and more democratic membership can ensure. In that respect, Africa deserves an appropriate place within that vital United Nations body.

The Security Council must therefore be enlarged in both the permanent and non-permanent memberships so as to meet the democratic requirements of our times and to allow various groups of countries to provide their valuable assistance in achieving the objectives of our Organization, which include peace and security, working for freedom and democracy, guaranteeing global prosperity through free and equitable international trade, preserving a healthy environment and creating stable international relations based on dialogue. If we truly seek to achieve all this, we must give our common Organization the resources commensurate with doing so.

May this session serve to strengthen cooperation among our States and peoples and assist us in consolidating peace and in achieving security and lasting development for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I am pleased to welcome and congratulate you, Sir, and the Republic of Gabon through you, for allowing us to share your experience and expertise on the occasion of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I must convey to Mr. Julian Hunte, Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, my country's gratitude for his hard work and memorable contribution to this Organization over the past year.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis reaffirms its strong support for and commitment to the praiseworthy, attainable Millennium Development Goals. Their stated objectives are fundamental and have long been incorporated into my country's national human development agenda.

For decades, before the Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon, Saint Kitts and Nevis had instituted compulsory primary and secondary education, which may explain our achievement of a literacy rate of 97.8 per cent. We in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are very proud of our achievements in the field of education. We owe much of that success to our coherent system of education and also to the University of the West Indies, whose academic credentials continue to amaze and evolve to meet the needs of our people. We invite fellow United Nations Member States to explore that resource in the Caribbean so their citizens can pursue higher education in that great institution of learning and in the most peaceful and pristine of multicultural settings.

It is easy to become excited when I speak of our efforts in addressing the issue of women in development, but we will not let down our guard. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, we have recognized and benefited from gender equality and the empowerment of women. It may be recalled that Saint Kitts and Nevis was among the first in this hemisphere to create a Ministry Of Women's Affairs.

Equally important to the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is winning the war against poverty. We remain steadfast in our efforts to eliminate poverty, which is not simply a noble ideal. It is a practical, achievable objective and, by God, it is the right thing to do. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, in the last seven years, we have endured social and economic dislocations in the wake of several catastrophic natural disasters, 9/11 and the downturns in the global economy. Nonetheless, with due care and attention to prudent fiscal and monetary management, we are investing in the socio-economic development of our country and continue to place people first in all that we do.

My Government has invested greatly in our national health system, supported by the construction of a modern hospital and the professional development of health care workers. We believe that this will improve the quality of and access to health care for nationals and visitors alike. Our continued efforts to build a healthy nation are consistent with our resolve to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.

Our capital project investments have improved the existing distribution networks to satisfy demand and to better extend service coverage for potable water throughout the islands of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Our road improvement and maintenance programmes have resurfaced miles of road and improved drainage throughout the twin island Federation. The improvement of the tourism product has generated several new jobs consistent with my Government's people-focused agenda. It has allowed us to depend

less on an agriculture-based economy, which continues to suffer from Government subsidies offered to farmers in large countries. Such subsidies make it more difficult for small economies like mine to compete. Our capacity to compete is further undermined by the recent unilateral decision of the European Union to reduce the price of sugar by more than 30 per cent.

Despite these challenges, we continue to press on, mindful of the need to preserve the environment. Saint Kitts and Nevis are two beautiful islands faced with the geographic reality of being located in the hurricane corridor. We witness the cost of beach and coastal erosion resulting from rising sea levels and hurricanes. Integrating environmentally sustainable policies into our development agenda has been a real challenge. However, our determination to protect and preserve the islands' patrimony by adopting environmentally friendly programmes is imperative.

At this juncture, I need to emphasize the current situation facing small island developing States. All small island developing States lack the economy of scale to overcome their vulnerabilities on their own. We are extremely vulnerable unless we form geographical partnerships, as CARICOM has done. That, however, does not exempt us from the vulnerabilities that we face every day. Geographical partnership does allow for a quick response in the event of adversity.

My delegation urges the international community to accept the concept of vulnerability, leading to a vulnerability index that can be appropriately applied to small island developing States. Grenada's devastation within three hours of being struck by hurricane Ivan dramatizes for us how a generation of development progress can be wiped out in a small vulnerable nation. There is a pressing need for a global development fund to assist small island developing States in recovery following national disasters.

Pragmatic and productive partnerships are the most effective vehicle available to the international community to tackle the multitude of problems we face. We speak of important issues, such as democracy, globalization, terrorism, poverty eradication, human development and the spread of infectious disease, as if they were completely disconnected. The goal of human development on any scale is best achieved by recognizing the interconnectedness of our lives, our economies and our policies. That imposes an obligation to develop common strategies, partnerships and policy approaches that accept and address the intrinsic linkages among the problems facing nation States.

I submit that the Pan-Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS is the first and only regional mechanism created to deal with the pandemic in a multinational way. Our regional cooperation has led to reductions in the cost of antiretroviral drugs from $20,000 per person per year to $200 per patient per year. We have also been successful in negotiating reduced prices for other important pharmaceutical drugs. That experience speaks to the value of partnership and cooperation. We believe that networks are the most effective means of problem solving. We praise the efforts of the Global Fund and the United Nations for their work in mobilizing additional resources to treat people living with HIV/AIDS and to fight the spread of the disease.

The idea of fighting HIV/AIDS only through faith simplifies the human condition and suggests a misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the disease. My Government insists that a pragmatic policy approach to fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS is as fundamental to good governance as is the holding of free and fair elections. Good governance means Governments listening to and caring for their citizens. Good governance implies that leaders must lead with moral courage and take bold and sometimes controversial steps in the public interests.

Good governance means placing the United Nations at the centre of our international interaction, in accordance with and in full respect for the Charter. Good governance requires respect for every country's right to choose its own course, consistent with its own laws and the will of its people. Good governance is not simply about whether we ostracize a country if its policies run counter to our national agenda. It should be about creating better understanding, cooperation and partnership and building bridges of friendship. Good governance suggests to us in Saint Kitts and Nevis that Governments abide by and commit themselves to internationally recognized standards and principles and do not discard them when it becomes expedient. Good governance entails holding everyone to the same standard and not raising the bar for some countries and lowering it for others.

Good governance should propel us to recognize the fact that nearly 23 million people in the Republic of

China on Taiwan are essentially in a diplomatic black hole, alienated from our international discourse. Good governance requires all peace-loving nations to urge both sides of the Taiwan Straits not only to commit to, but also to engage in constructive dialogue and preventive diplomacy. Good governance behooves us to support the hard work of the leaders and people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to comply with and work within the framework of international law. Good governance says to us in Saint Kitts and Nevis that a people committed to the rule of law and democracy and willing to invest in human development at home and abroad should never be excluded from the fraternity of nations.

In addition, CARICOM takes great pride in our parliamentary system of Government and our solid democracies from a centuries-old tradition. Our history teaches us that good governance and human development are indivisible. Where representative democracy, democratic institution-building, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights have not flourished, human development has suffered. Where Governments have failed to respect the will of the people, human development has faltered. Although CARICOM faces great limitations and challenges owing to the absence of natural and financial resources, we have managed to build credible democratic institutions, a reliable judicial system and lasting democracies in which the transition from incumbent Governments to opposition parties passes without incident. We are ready to share these experiences with the rest of the world.

In conclusion, for decades countries and academics have questioned the viability of small States. History, though, has witnessed not only our viability, but also that we are a dependable beacon of hope for others, be they large or small. We live in an interconnected world where national political decisions in one corner of the world have devastating consequences thousands of miles away.

We must therefore of necessity become our brothers' keepers. In that vein, we call on Member States to lend their support to the international meeting to review the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, scheduled to be held in Mauritius in January 2005.

Finally, I would like to repeat my call that partnership must trump nationalism and that multilateralism must transcend unilateralism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moctar Ouane, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau, whom I also congratulate, of the full support of the delegation of Mali as you carry out your mission.

I also wish to pay tribute to the dedication of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to thank him for his tireless efforts in the service of the United Nations.

Six days ago, Mali commemorated in its own way the forty-fourth anniversary of its independence. From this high rostrum, the most symbolic of all, I wish to recall the efforts of my country to build, under the leadership of Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic and Head of State, a democratic, stable and prosperous Mali asserting its place in the concert of nations.

For several weeks now, our country and others of the North and West African regions, have been stricken by an unprecedented locust infestation. As President Amadou Toumani Touré stressed in his message to the nation on 22 September, the magnitude and speed of the infestation have surpassed the most pessimistic projections. The catastrophic effects of that insect plague on the upcoming harvest and on our vegetation are a true threat to the livelihood of the millions of men and women thus exposed to famine.

The Government of the Republic of Mali is actively working to suppress the scourge, above all through a national mobilization that has brought teams, brigades and village communities to work in the field, and with the support of the international community, and in particular to brotherly African countries. I reiterate here my country's gratitude to them all. I also wish firmly to say, however, that, faced with the insect plague and in order to ensure the food security of infested countries, including Mali, we have a shared responsibility to launch and strengthen short-, medium-

and long-term international mobilization. We must act, act quickly and act effectively.

Questions related to international peace and security continue to be a source of concern to us. In the past year we have seen crises and conflicts multiply throughout the world. I would like, in particular, to recall the situation in West Africa and Mali's initiatives to contribute to the settlement of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, whose subregional repercussions are considerable and fraught with consequences for peace and stability in West Africa.

In this regard, the so-called Bamako II meeting made it possible to establish the conditions for the success of the Accra III high-level meeting. I forcefully echo the assertion of President Amadou Toumani Touré that Mali will continue to support peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire: peace for the people of Côte d'Ivoire, and peace for all of the foreigners who live in that brotherly neighbouring country.

Here I would mention Mali's participation in the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Haiti.

Furthermore, Mali's commitment to international peace and security is at the root of our country's action to make the Sahelo-Saharan area a focal point of development and stability. This was especially evident during the Malian presidency of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States.

Mali is also deeply concerned by the situation in the Middle East: measures to close off Palestinian territories, arbitrary arrests, extrajudiciary executions, the destruction of property, land seizures, lack of respect for resolutions adopted by the international community and the siege imposed upon President Arafat. Those actions do not help to establish true peace in that part of the world. Mali, which has always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people, urgently appeals to the members of the Quartet to restore dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, with a view to a just, equitable and lasting settlement of a conflict which has gone on too long.

International terrorism is today another challenge to international peace and security. We have seen this phenomenon on all continents, making it abundantly clear that terrorism has neither homeland nor religion. That is why the international community must display steadfast political will in combating terrorism by, inter alia, strengthening the available legal arsenal, including mechanisms for cooperation and technical assistance. Beyond this, we must tackle the root causes of the phenomenon, which include poverty, massive human rights violations, intolerance, injustice and impunity from prosecution.

The question of small arms and light weapons is also a primary concern for us. Mali has made a significant contribution in this area by developing initiatives at the subregional, regional and international levels. In this regard, Mali is striving to transform the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa into a convention. We further believe that the international community must now resolutely engage in the establishment of a binding legal instrument on marking, registering and tracing small arms and light weapons.

The situation of children in armed conflicts is also a source of concern for my country. We fully support the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (E/CN.4/2004/70), and call for the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004). Along the same lines, Mali is working within the Human Security Network to keep this question among the priorities of our Organization.

In order to effectively prevent and manage these situations of crisis and conflict — that is, to preserve and guarantee international peace and security — the international community must work for an international order that is based on the rule of law, and for a United Nations whose legitimacy is strengthened. Thus, we welcome the establishment of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and we anxiously await its conclusions.

The question of development is, and must remain, a priority issue on the international agenda, and thus we welcome the decision to hold a plenary meeting in 2005 devoted to follow-up of the outcome of the Millennium Summit, and to a comprehensive and coordinated follow-up and implementation of documents from the major conferences and summit meetings organized by the United Nations on economic

and social topics. We hope that that meeting will enable us to conduct an objective and candid review of the way in which commitments have been met, including the progress achieved and obstacles remaining in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Defeating poverty is a major objective for the Government of the Republic of Mali. As part of that endeavour, the adoption in 2002, and the implementation, of a strategic framework, has made it possible to achieve important results in the areas of education, health, rural development and basic infrastructure. I take this opportunity to express Mali's support for the initiative launched by Presidents Jacques Chirac and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, which led to the New York Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty adopted on 20 September 2004.

On trade negotiations, Mali attaches great importance to the round of trade negotiations under way within the World Trade Organization (WTO): the Doha development round. We hope that those negotiations will lead to an economic system which will enable all countries, especially developing countries, to fully maximize their potential. We hope to see a true breakthrough in agricultural negotiations, which should lead to the elimination of subsidies and other production and export support mechanisms, particularly with respect to cotton. Indeed, cotton is one of the commodities where we, African producer countries, offer true comparative advantages, since production costs are one fifth those in developed countries. At present, however, our countries are seriously harmed by production and export subsidies for cotton.

For that reason, we reaffirm our opposition to subsidy policies which undermine free market competition, lead to overproduction and lower prices on the international market and prevent our agriculture from getting off the ground.

That is why Mali is also calling for the gradual elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as the implementation of measures on the free movement of people, goods and services. We are pleased with the European Union's commitment to facilitate the integration of least developed countries within the multilateral trading system, including through the adoption in April 2004 of an action plan for agriculture that includes a proposal for an Africa-Europe partnership on cotton.

The AIDS pandemic is progressing at such an alarming rate that, in addition to its health repercussions, it has today become a problem for economic and social development, especially in Africa. That is why we must implement, urgently and in full, the commitments that we undertook in 2001 so that we can mobilize the necessary energy and resources to effectively fight the scourge. Mali has set up a multisectoral programme to fight HIV/AIDS at a cost of $150 million, or 73 billion CFA francs. The implementation of that programme will make it possible to distribute antiretroviral drugs to patients free of charge, as well as to provide necessary impetus to the information and awareness campaign with a view to prevention. Pilot laboratories for screening and counselling will be established throughout the country, and small and medium-sized businesses for social outreach will be set up, thus providing jobs for young people.

With regard to the situation of people with disabilities, Mali is pleased with the negotiations that are under way with a view to elaborating a convention to protect their rights and dignity. We are convinced that the adoption of such an instrument would establish a framework for improved social and economic integration for people with disabilities, allowing them to fully participate in the development efforts of their respective societies.

I would like to conclude in the same vein as I began — by emphatically reaffirming the faith that Mali has in the United Nations, whose purposes and principles, set out almost 60 years ago, remain deeply meaningful and highly relevant. It is true that recently the Organization's capacity and credibility have been seriously undermined. It is therefore all the more important that we carry out a thorough reform of the Organization and revitalize its main bodies. Mali welcomes the important progress that has been achieved in the context of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The reorganization of the work of the Main Committees, the strengthening of the role of the Bureau and the improvement in working methods will certainly result in the greater effectiveness of this important body. I would like to pay tribute, Sir, to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the remarkable work that he accomplished in that respect.

Mali shares the common African position that Security Council reform is a necessary — indeed, a priority — task if we are to strengthen the capacities and the credibility of that important body. The Council must be more representative and legitimate. Its composition should reflect the realities of today's world and be expanded in both categories of membership, with particular account being taken of the representation of Africa.

The people of the world have placed their hope in the United Nations, and they expect, in return, greater peace, security, democracy, development and solidarity. As the community of nations, we have the means to achieve those goals, thanks to our collective awareness and the safeguarding of the values we all share: democracy, respect for the rule of law, the primacy of human rights, the preservation of the environment and the protection of future generations from the scourge of war.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): Allow me to extend to you warm congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I would like to assure you of our fullest cooperation as you discharge the heavy responsibility bestowed upon you. I have no doubt that both Gabon and Africa will be proud of the leadership that I know you will provide at this session.

I would also like to commend your predecessor for his invaluable contribution to the success of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We continue to be deeply grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great work that he has been doing in a variety of areas and at various levels. We are grateful to him for doing whatever is humanly possible at the international level to protect the integrity of the United Nations and to defend the rule of law. At the level of Africa, we appreciate his commitment to the creation of the political and economic conditions to generate hope for the revival of the continent.

Never before have we in Africa been as determined and as resolute in our attempt to change for the better the economic and social conditions on our continent and to create the right climate for peace and stability.

That is what the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union (AU) signifies and what the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) symbolizes. NEPAD's Peer Review Mechanism is a vivid demonstration of Africa's commitment to good and accountable governance.

The renewed vigour with which we in Africa have begun to be proactive in the area of peace and stability within the framework of the Peace and Security Council of the AU is, indeed, a promising beginning. But despite the efforts being made by Africa, the progress that we have made so far has been modest and thus insufficient to bring about hope for the future of the continent.

Part of the explanation for that is obvious. There is just not sufficient support internationally to make it possible for Africa to meet the economic challenges that it is facing. Terms of trade have continued to militate against Africa's development. Moreover, no substantial progress has been made to relieve many in Africa of the debt burden.

It is the combination of all of those factors that has created serious doubts about the ability of many in Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is our hope that those trends will be reversed and that the promises made in the Millennium Declaration fulfilled.

At the end of the day, nations must assume responsibility for their future, for their development and for their peace and stability. Ethiopia has no illusions in that regard. We realize fully that, in the final analysis, it is what Ethiopians do that will shape and determine our future. It is that conviction that is the basis for the various activities currently under way in our country.

With respect to issues of development, the primary task for us is the fight against poverty and ensuring food security for our people. A nation as diverse as Ethiopia can countenance no other form of governance than democratic governance. As such, the very survival of Ethiopia requires good governance and the democratic handling of differences, as a matter not only of preference but of prudence. Peace and stability

in Ethiopia hinge on the deepening of democracy in the country.

It is precisely for that reason, and with a view to making up for lost time, that at present there is no greater imperative for Ethiopia than the fostering of peace and stability in our country and in the region of which Ethiopia is a part.

It is that same logic which governs Ethiopia's position on the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Let there be no doubt that Ethiopia wants to put its crisis with Eritrea behind it. Our conviction is that both peoples would be mistaken to see the other as an enemy. The truth is that both have one common enemy — poverty and backwardness.

It is, indeed, regrettable that after so much bloodshed it has become difficult for Ethiopia and Eritrea to formally complete the peace process because of complications that have been created in connection with the implementation of some aspects of the decision of the Eritrea/Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC). I said, "some aspects of the decision" of the EEBC because, when the chips are down, the obstacles to a breakthrough in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea involve a controversy surrounding the demarcation of no more than 15 per cent of a common boundary which is, altogether, more than 1,000 kilometres long.

Let me be very clear. Ethiopia is prepared to do whatever is humanly possible for peace. There is no greater priority for us than ensuring peace in our country and stable and mutually beneficial relations with all our neighbours. That is precisely why we have reiterated that we are ready to dialogue with Eritrea with a view to finding a win-win solution to the current stalemate faced by both countries.

Dialogue and normalization of relations between the two countries is not a favour that either party does for the other, or for the international community. Rather, it is an obligation that both countries have, inasmuch as all other alternatives are ruled out by international law and by the Algiers Agreement.

The promotion of durable peace between the two countries and the call for the permanent cessation of military hostilities between the two parties are the twin pillars of the Algiers Agreement. Ethiopia is convinced that the implementation of some aspects of the Boundary Commission's observations on demarcation is not in the interest of peace between the two countries and will not advance the major objectives of the Algiers Agreement, nor will it advance the cause of peace in our subregion.

It is under those circumstances that Ethiopia has felt that there is only one rational way out of the impasse — dialogue, an open-ended dialogue on all issues dividing Ethiopia and Eritrea, including on boundary demarcation with a view to finding an amicable and a mutually acceptable way out of the deadlock and a modus vivendi that would form the basis for the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Eritrea, however, is of a different mind. It continues to be preoccupied with the hope of getting the Security Council to impose sanctions on Ethiopia and with the satisfaction that it would derive from such an outcome. Eritrea should be made to realize that that is unlikely to happen. Not because Eritrea is not big enough to have its way, but because the idea is too inappropriate and too unrealistic. Formality aside — and Eritrea's oft-heard refrain of "final and binding" notwithstanding — no fair-minded person can forget what happened in May 1998 and up through May 2000, and what the OAU said about Badme and its environs.

But talking about the past is not going to help Ethiopia or Eritrea. The two countries cannot continue spending so much time on their preoccupation with each other. That will leave no time for thinking about their future and the future of their hungry and destitute peoples.

There is one other important point that Eritrea should not be allowed to continue misleading the international community about. Nowhere in the whole text of the Algiers Agreement of December 2000 is a provision made for any entity — including the Security Council and the AU — to enforce a court decision. That omission is deliberate, not accidental. Achieving peace and implementing the demarcation of the common boundary between the two countries is primarily the responsibility of Ethiopia and Eritrea, a point that has been repeated in various resolutions by the Security Council.

Let me close the issue by reiterating one fundamental point. Ethiopia is committed to peace with Eritrea and to the removal of obstacles to achieving that objective. Whatever means might be available to reach that goal, we will be ready to embrace them.

Dialogue and negotiation, including using the good offices of the Secretary-General which have been made available to the two parties, are the most realistic and feasible means for making progress in the peace process. Ethiopia is ready to go more than half way to make that a reality, but so far it has largely been left in the proverbial situation of trying to clap with one hand. It is our hope that reason will prevail in Eritrea sooner rather than later.

The peace process in Somalia has now come to a very critical point, with the Somalis having now come closer than any time in the last 13 years to establishing a national Government. Ethiopia will continue, as a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Facilitation Committee, to contribute to the achievement of national reconciliation and work to help the Somali State rise from the ashes. That is an obligation for Ethiopia and it is also consistent with the vital interest Ethiopia has in peace and stability in our subregion.

For those reasons, Ethiopia was looking forward to the final consummation of the peace process between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA), which has now slowed down because of the tragedy in Darfur — an unanticipated tragedy. Ethiopia is keen to see the Darfur crisis resolved and the humanitarian tragedy dealt with as speedily as possible. Peace and stability in the Sudan is so critical for our subregion and for that reason Ethiopia will continue to do the best it can, including as a member of the AU Peace and Security Council, to assist that sister country to overcome the challenge it is facing.

Ethiopia's contribution to peace and peace-building is not limited to what we have been doing in our own subregion. We have from the outset been closely associated with the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, including at the highest level. Moreover, initially as part of the African Union mission and later as part of the United Nations Operation in Burundi, Ethiopia's contingent in Burundi has continued to contribute in a modest way to the success of the peace process there.

Another modest contribution we are making is in joining the efforts under way for the restoration of peace in Liberia as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

Certainly, we are also the beneficiaries of the support of a great many countries through the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), whose work has been critical for keeping the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea stable. We are indeed grateful to UNMEE, its personnel at all levels, and to the troop-contributing countries.

We all agree that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a crime against humanity. As our Secretary-General rightly stated in his address to this Assembly at the 3rd meeting, "No cause, no grievance, however legitimate in itself, can begin to justify such acts". The international community should therefore fight that scourge with greater resolve and in unison.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and to the principles and purposes for the promotion of which it was created. It is our earnest hope that the United Nations will continue to enhance its credibility with respect to its entire membership. That is why the reform of the Organization is so critical and imperative, including the reform of the Security Council, so that regions, including Africa, can have the fair representation they aspire to. Without a doubt, enhanced democratization will make the United Nations more transparent and therefore more credible. The future of the Organization rests on it. In the meantime, Ethiopia will continue to be devoted to the United Nations and to the values it stands for.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Niger.

Mrs. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to join those who have spoken before me in extending warm congratulations on behalf of my country, my delegation and myself for your brilliant election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. The Chairman of the African Union, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, already expressed here a few days ago our continent's gratitude to the international community, which, by choosing you, has made one of Africa's most illustrious sons President of the General Assembly. We naturally associate ourselves with that expression of gratitude. We wish you every success in carrying out your lofty mission, and you know you have always had Niger's support. To your predecessor,

His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, I should like to express our congratulations on the skill, enthusiasm and authority with which he conducted the work of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly in a difficult international context.

Today, the international community finds itself at a crossroads. International peace and security — already sorely tested by recurrent armed conflicts — are subjected to threats or bloody attacks of terrorist acts, which further darken the global atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity. In your opening statement, Mr. President, you mentioned one of those persistent and bloody conflicts — that of the Middle East, a conflict that costs so much to humanity in terms of human lives, financial resources and lost hope. That region's macabre statistics remind us — as if that were still necessary — of the urgent need to bring the parties to the negotiating table on the basis of the road map, which the Security Council itself endorsed through its resolution 1515 (2003).

Today, in addition to the Palestinian problem and in light of Iraq, the situation in the Middle East is central to world peace and security as never before. With respect to Iraq — a country with which Niger shares the same faith, Islam, the basis of our common membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference — we cannot fail to deplore so much loss of human life and so much blind violence, which are the daily lot of the Iraqi people. We earnestly hope that greater, revitalized international cooperation will enable us to swiftly establish free and democratic institutions in Iraq, put an end to the chaos that seems to have taken root there and bring to the country the peace and stability necessary for its socio-economic development.

Niger, as a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, believes that a sustained dialogue between India and Pakistan will make it possible to lay the foundation for a peaceful solution to that conflict by enabling the people of Kashmir to exercise their right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Concerning Western Sahara, Niger reaffirms its support for United Nations efforts with a view to reaching a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The commendable actions of the Secretary-General should be continued and supported until we see a successful conclusion, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 1495 (2003) and 1541 (2004).

In Niger, at the end of a long and sometimes painful process, we have established a political system in which a multitude of parties, private media and civil society organizations flourish, all of them under the protective umbrella of a constitution that guarantees the separation of powers and an independent judiciary. His Excellency Mr. Tandja Mamadou, President of the Republic since the democratic elections of 22 November 1999, invited the people of Niger on 14 September 2004 to vote in new presidential and legislative elections that will be held starting on 13 November 2004. That will be the first time since 1991 — when the multiparty system was established in Niger — that a fully democratic mandate has been completed. And it will be successfully, because in our country, social peace has returned, State authority has been restored, the economy is back on track and the people of Niger have new hope. On 24 July, the building of democratic structures was completed through municipal and local elections, to the great satisfaction of everyone.

The restored status of the State has made it possible — thanks to the personal intervention of President Tandja Mamadou — to quickly overcome the resistance of the remaining few who were still opposed to the expanded polio vaccination programme. Here, I must sincerely thank the international community — particularly the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Centres for Disease Control of the United States and Rotary International — for having effectively assisted us in our efforts in that fight.

At the external level, our public and private bilateral partners who left Niger before 1999 have since returned. Niger's presidency of the West African Economic and Monetary Union and, last year, of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States has given greater visibility to our external action aimed at peace and security in Africa. In particular, that action has taken the form of sending a Niger contingent to Côte d'Ivoire, military observers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and civilian police components to Burundi, the Central African Republic and Timor-Leste. All that has convinced us that the international community's support is more essential today than ever before to help Africa strengthen the capacities of its

subregional institutions and those of its continental organization, the African Union.

Under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the African Union is working ceaselessly to prevent conflicts in African countries where peace reigns, to consolidate peace and security where — as in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone or Liberia — the populations have barely emerged from a situation of political instability or bloody armed conflicts, and, lastly, to extinguish the hotbeds of tension persisting in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Sudan.

Our experience with conflict prevention and resolution in Africa teaches us that the golden rule in that respect is to have confidence in subregional institutions and the African Union and to support them with consistent logistical and financial means. In that regard, Niger welcomes the decision taken by the Security Council to support the African Union's decision to strengthen and expand the observation mission in Darfur and to encourage member States to provide all the equipment and logistical, financial and material resources required for the mission's swift expansion. We earnestly hope that the various parties to the conflict will respond positively to the appeals coming from Africa and elsewhere to swiftly put an end to that tragedy and to bring about a comprehensive peace agreement, on which the advent of a peaceful Sudan will depend.

Within the framework of Africa's new development initiatives, the heads of State of the African Union agreed, during a special summit held recently in Ouagadougou, to place employment at the centre of their political, economic and social policies. As rightly pointed out by His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso and host of the summit, Africa needs the effective support of the international community to implement the decisions of Ouagadougou.

From the Millennium Declaration to the world conferences and summits that followed it, many international decisions made the fight against poverty a world priority and a major challenge for humanity. How, then, can it be that hundreds of millions of people continue to languish in abject poverty and total destitution? How can it be that, in this era of technological and scientific advances, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics continue to wreak havoc throughout the world, particularly in Africa? How can it be that, at a time of globalization, many parts of the planet — particularly the least developed countries — are still totally excluded from international trade? And how can it be that, despite the commitments undertaken through the relevant international conventions, the global environment continues insidiously to deteriorate, dangerously jeopardizing the future of generations to come?

In light of that situation, and in view of the dearth of financial resources to address the crucial problems assailing humanity, we must wonder about the existence of real political will on the part of rich countries to help the most impoverished countries overcome abject poverty. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS and the World Solidarity Fund for the Elimination of Poverty — whose creation we welcome — suffer from a cruel lack of resources.

Furthermore, we believe the modalities for granting those resources to eligible countries should be modelled after those in force for the funds obtained in the framework of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, in order to ensure management that is both transparent and responsible.

We have to face the reality. Given the economic stagnation, poverty and the lack of prospects that are serious threats for social stability and the young democracies of developing countries, international cooperation is the key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals — as long as developed and developing countries agree to assume their respective responsibilities. In this respect, the commitments made in Doha to promote a just trade, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on Sustainable Development remain the cornerstones for implementation of the Goals.

However, the meagre results achieved in the implementation of conclusions from major forums prompt the international community as a whole to re-examine its conscience. The upcoming high-level dialogue on financing for development should be an opportunity to once again place at the core of the debate the important issue of the mobilization of resources for development. In this respect, taxation at a level to be agreed upon — as was recalled at the last summit on poverty — on all international financial transactions could provide the substantial funding so

necessary for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Endemic poverty, which affects the African continent in particular, is not a question of fate. It is possible to reduce poverty as long as the international community is resolute in tackling it. It is possible to reduce poverty if industrialized countries implement without delay the enhanced programme to alleviate the debt of highly indebted countries and agree to cancel all bilateral public debts. It is possible to reduce poverty if industrialized countries agree to increase official development assistance to the level necessary to reach the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. It is possible to reduce poverty if industrialized countries resolve to open their markets to commodities from developing countries, and if raw materials from those countries are purchased at their proper values. It is possible to reduce poverty if industrialized countries eliminate their farming subsidies for cotton and support the countries concerned in their policy for providing rural areas with a suitable farming infrastructure and, especially, with small rural facilities.

Lastly, it is possible to reduce poverty if globalization is better managed and if interdependence leads to the establishment of an international financial and commercial structure that is democratic and able to meet the needs of all parties.

Not so long ago the international community, with the Group of 8 in the lead, solemnly declared its commitment to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Today we must acknowledge that that great enthusiasm still has not materialized in concrete actions on a scale that would meet the legitimate aspirations of African continent. Despite constant efforts by the African countries, there is still much left to be done to meet the objectives contained in that vast and ambitious partnership.

I am pleased to say here that Niger is very pleased to work with the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General for NEPAD, as well as with the Office of the High Representative of the United Nations for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States.

To conclude, it is important that the Desertification Convention be effectively implemented, a convention that is seen as the best illustration of the link between environmental degradation and poverty.

Speaking of environmental degradation, how can we overlook the ecological ravages caused by the current locust invasion in part of Africa? Because it did not act in good time, the international community — which had been warned of this danger far in advance — must now mobilize, as soon as possible, sufficient financial and material means to stop the spread of the plague in order to halt the spectre of famine that looms over the populations of northern Africa, the Sahel and West Africa as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. El-Amine (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Comoros and on my own behalf, to congratulate you warmly on your election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Your task is by no means an easy one, but it is an honour to you personally, to your country and to the entire African continent. No other organization can boast of that universal mission. I would therefore like to assure you of the full readiness of my delegation to work with you for the success of that noble mission in the service of peace and security in the world.

My delegation welcomes the way in which your predecessor guided the work at the fifty-eighth session. On behalf of the Comoros I hail the tireless commitment and complete availability of the Secretary-General in the fight he leads to advance the ideals of peace, social justice, development and freedom throughout the world.

The world — a world of peace and vision,
Of ideas and union now unfurled,
A world that has divided lands
And with seas that share their sands;
World of tolerance and knowing,
World abundance, overflowing;
World of peace, world that charmed,
No, world; you cannot be harmed.

Nations unity provided,
But hearts tend to be divided.
For we have met each other,
And yet our peoples live in fear.
Children of the world,
and countries of the world,

Where is the world?
What is this world?

Borders here do not exist;
Prayers vanish in the mist.
Terror is their daily lot;
Fear is all that they have got.
Killers rule instead of bread.

Millennium world, world so fair,
Yet a world of billionaires;
World of speeches of all sorts
Within fora, and of courts.
World rejecting our solutions
and denying resolutions.
What a world. What a peace.

While the world is slowly forging ahead in this third millennium, we are obliged to note that the feelings of our respective peoples are fluctuating between hope and concern. Indeed, while the relationship between peace and development is becoming increasingly justified and is making them indivisible, the path of world events is tending to call this into question. It is indeed true that there can be no peace and no security in the world as long as hundreds of millions of individuals are still prisoners of destitution and poverty and still do not have the minimum necessary for a decent daily life. Nor can there be peace and security in the world as long as, working all together, we have not made the required efforts to save the hundreds of millions of human lives threatened by the scourges of AIDS and other pandemics.

Moreover, what kind of peace can there be in a world that makes the spread of weapons and the proliferation of hotbeds of tension the very pattern of its existence and the means for its evolution?

These are the problems before us, this forum with the highest priority mission of seeing to the proper conduct of world affairs, the prosperity and flourishing of the human race and to the control of the global environment by our actions, which must serve the cause and the welfare of each and every people, each nation and each citizen of the world.

That is why it is incumbent on the United Nations, today more than ever, to play fully its role as defined by the Charter. This role is one of vanguard action, of mediation par excellence, of stimulus and of promotion of the remarkable accomplishments wrought every day by the progress of science.

For that reason, my country says "no" to poverty, "no" to AIDS and other pandemics, "no" to terrorism and "yes" to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In order to combat the scourges of poverty, major diseases and terrorism, we need a firm and determined will to work for development.

The Millennium Summit, in which all the foremost leaders of our planet participated, took full note of that reality. The Millennium Declaration set out the steps and the course to follow in order to effectively direct the world's development and progressively correct the problems identified. The Declaration established 2015 as the deadline for reviewing the plan of action that each country must implement, in a collective resolve to get the world back on track.

The Union of the Comoros endorses the Millennium Development Goals. While working for progress in the national reconciliation process, the Government of my country, like all other members of the community of nations, has made the necessary efforts to establish a poverty reduction strategy. Today, that document to which all active forces in our country contributed, constitutes the instrument panel of our development priorities.

In order for the Comoros to act on those development priorities, it requires the assistance of the international community. It was only this past April that my country finally completed the establishment of its institutions, thus bringing to a close the separatist and institutional crisis that for seven years had shaken the foundations of our State.

In particular, we hope that the entire international community will support the African Union's call, issued at the recent summit at Addis Ababa, for an international donors round-table meeting to be held to assist the convalescent Comoros. This would enable it to recover and by stages to rejoin the other nations in working at the subregional, continental and global levels to achieve sustainable development, which is now its greatest priority.

The firm national commitment of all Member States of the international community is required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This

militates in favour of the enhanced representation of continents and peoples in the United Nations.

We should therefore consider increasing the permanent membership of the Security Council to include, for example, the Republic of India, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federative Republic of Brazil. The African continent and the Arab world also deserve appropriate representation on the Security Council. That is the way to achieve equity, and equity is desperately needed for there to be greater justice and peace in the world. That appears to be what must be done today to create the necessary balance for control of the international order and the global environment, which have never been so unstable and uncertain.

In the eternal search for peace, social justice and prosperity, the fate of small island States, which face so many threats to their survival, must not remain in jeopardy. Let us be fully aware that numerous countries are destined to disappear because of such hazards as rising sea-levels, desertification, cyclones and volcanic eruptions. Accordingly, we must consider specific actions for each of those States. We urge the international community to mobilize on a large scale to ensure the success of the forthcoming meting of small island developing States, to be convened on the island of Mauritius early in 2005.

I must not fail to affirm before the Assembly that my country, the Union of the Comoros, in its concern to maintain its unity and integrity, considers the issue of the Comorian island of Mayotte to be one of its greatest and most urgent priorities. My Government is convinced that a speedy settlement of this dispute will further the development of the country as a whole and will enable it to resolutely take its place alongside peace- and freedom-loving countries and to champion universal ideals and promote democracy in the world.

The Union of the Comoros therefore calls on the French Republic to engage in a constructive political dialogue on this issue, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 3385 (XXX), which admitted the Comoros to the United Nations as the Comoro Archipelago, composed of four islands: Mayotte, Anjouan, Mohéli and Grande-Comore.

In the same spirit, my country attaches the utmost importance to the principle of a single independent and indivisible China and calls for the restoration of the island of Taiwan to its rightful home.

My country truly values the very constructive dialogue now under way between the Government of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the question of Kashmir.

The Union of the Comoros sincerely hopes that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples will soon institute a dialogue that will bring about an end to the violence and lead to the peaceful coexistence of those two neighbouring peoples.

It also hopes to see a just and equitable settlement to the question of Western Sahara and vigorously supports the efforts made to that end by the United Nations and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Union of the Comoros vehemently condemns the hostage-takings in Iraq and hopes to see a rapid return of peace and security in Iraq, which will contribute to security in the region.

The Union of the Comoros is closely following developments in Darfur. It supports the efforts of the African Union, the Government of the Sudan and the entire international community to find a speedy, just and equitable settlement of that question.

Finally, I hope that the work of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will be successful, and I join all those eminent personalities who have preceded me at this noble rostrum in expressing my country's most fervent desires for greater peace and security throughout the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. Kaddoumi (Palestine): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Ping, on your election as President of the General Assembly during its fifty-ninth session. We are confident that you will conduct the proceedings of this session with great competence. I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, who so ably presided over the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

I would like to express at this time my deep appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General to harmonize international relations and ensure respect for the principles of the Charter and international law, with a view to strengthening international peace and security. His statement before this Assembly marks a

landmark in the quest for the rule of law and respect for the role of the United Nations in international conflicts.

In my statement, I will focus on the turbulent situation in the Middle East and, more specifically, on the core of the conflict in the Middle East. The situation in the region of Western Asia — or the Middle East — is in turmoil. The occupation of Iraq was founded on false pretexts, further damaging the already grave situation resulting from Israel's policies and practices in occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. A total absence of law and order is now the general pattern of life in occupied Iraq. This continued occupation is wreaking havoc on the economic and social aspects of life there. We urge the competent institutions, namely the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, to take the necessary and appropriate measures to ensure Iraq's independence and sovereignty as soon as possible.

Israel is the only nuclear Power in the Middle East. It has approximately the fourth most powerful army in the world and is a sophisticated arms developer and dealer with no ethical or moral constraints and no concern for human rights. The Israeli Government can therefore do anything it wishes, and it acts like a high-tech military expert and rogue State. It has become tremendously useful for the United States, since it has strategically placed itself in the centre of the global arms industry. Counting on the support of the United States, Israel breaks moral and international laws with impunity.

The daily assaults on peaceful Palestinian towns and villages — the demolition of homes and houses, the bulldozing and uprooting of age-old fruit-bearing olive and citrus trees, the targeted killings and assassinations, the closures, the imposition of a state of siege and curfews and the use of excessively disproportionate firepower, which has resulted, so far, in more than 3,200 deaths and thousands of injuries — are common knowledge. We completely reject the allegation by Israel that this is carried out in self-defence. The Palestinians under occupation, with their meagre means of combat, are the party exercising the right to self-defence. Almost 8,000 Palestinians are being held without trial under merciless conditions, and when they protested against those conditions, an Israeli minister boasted, and I quote, "let them go on a hunger strike until they die".

In addition to all the other methods Israel uses to obstruct peace, it holds our democratically elected President, Yasser Arafat, in confinement and has announced that they can find no partner with whom to negotiate peace. With whom are the negotiations for settlement and peace to be negotiated, if not with the democratically elected President? Israel, and others of the same mind, must wish to see a continuation of the status quo or to deal with an imposed — and not democratically elected — group or person.

The performance-based road map was unanimously backed by Security Council resolution 1515 (2003). We have accepted the road map since, in our opinion, it augured well. The road map envisaged a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and stated that the solution of the conflict

> "will only be achieved through an end to violence and terrorism, when the Palestinian people have a leadership acting decisively against terror and willing and able to build a practising democracy based on tolerance and liberty, and through Israel's readiness to do what is necessary for a democratic Palestinian state to be established".

The Palestinians, through their representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, embraced the road map and believes it offers another opportunity to end the conflict. We hope that the Quartet will seriously assume the noble task of implementing the objectives of the road map.

Acts of State terrorism were Israel's response to the performance-based road map. To be more specific, a 2,000-pound bomb was dropped after the Palestinians scrupulously observed an unofficial ceasefire. Israel still adheres to the 14 reservations it had regarding the road map. The nebulous ideas and intentions revealed in the exchange of letters between President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon on the matter of the commitment to the road map are far from encouraging and keep the road map and Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) in limbo if not completely neglecting and rejecting them.

In his letter of assurance dated 14 April 2004 to Prime Minister Sharon, President Bush reiterates that

> "the United States supports the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent, so that the Palestinian people can build their own future in

accordance with ... the path set forth in the roadmap".

However, when President Bush addresses the reality on the ground, he assures Israel that "it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949".

He admits that as part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders, which should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). However, Mr. Bush and Mr. Sharon do not topographically identify the secure and recognized borders of Israel.

In the aforementioned letter of assurance, President Bush stresses that the United States is strongly committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish State. He does not concern himself with the security of the so-called provisional State of Palestine. He seems to be oblivious to the fact that 20 per cent of the citizens of Israel are non-Jewish and that Israel has not as yet defined who is a Jew. This concept will inevitably lead to the creation of a racist society within the Israeli political entity.

To ensure the success of the road map and the achievement of its goal — a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005 — the plan also requires that Israel "freezes all settlement activity" and "withdraws from Palestinian areas occupied from 28 September 2000".

Commenting on the meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon, Javier Solana, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, stated on 15 April 2004:

> "The EU remains firmly committed to a negotiated settlement resulting in two viable, sovereign and independent States ... as the only way to achieve a permanent peace and an end to the occupation that began in 1967, in the framework of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.
>
> "EU heads of State or Government recently indicated that they would not recognize any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties. A permanent settlement must also include an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue".

In order further to deviate from the direct route to the targeted destination, Sharon declared that he was absolutely determined to carry out disengagement in Gaza despite the political problems within his own party, the Likud. Indeed, the party believes that disengagement conflicts with the Zionist aim of the creeping annexation of Palestinian territory. Sharon's plan creates a situation in which Israel will have to leave the settlements but will still control everything that enters and exits Gaza. It will tightly seal off Gaza and block the only outlet that allows Palestinians in Gaza to cross into and from neighbouring Egypt.

All of this is a source of concern for the international community, as reflected in the number of meetings held by the General Assembly. Israel did not heed the request by the Assembly in resolution ES-10/14, which, by necessity, called for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice on the following question:

> "What are the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, as described in the report of the Secretary-General, considering the rules and principles of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?"

The General Assembly, by an overwhelming majority of 150 votes, acknowledged the Court's advisory opinion of 9 July 2004. The representatives of the Governments of the United States of America and of Israel were among the six countries that voted against.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express our great appreciation for the learned opinion of the judges. I wish to quote from the opinion, as it is of direct relevance to the General Assembly:

> "All States are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction;

> "... The United Nations, and especially the General Assembly and the Security Council, should consider what further action is required to bring to an end the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and the associated regime, taking due account of the present advisory opinion."

In order to restore faith and confidence in the effectiveness of the United Nations and its Charter, I would appeal that the opinion of the Court be heeded and that action-oriented resolutions, including concrete mechanisms for implementation, be adopted and carried out.

The Palestinian people and leadership have demonstrated goodwill and accepted in good faith the provisions of the road map and other proposals leading to the termination of the Israeli occupation of our Palestinian territory, so that we in the Middle East can all live in peace and security and stability. What is needed is for the other party, Israel, to commit itself to respond, in word and in deed.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.